

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4503

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CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, SF

SUBJECT: BLACK CLOTHING WORKERS REJOIN TUCSA

1. EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF BLACK NATIONAL UNION OF CLOTHING WORKERS, SUPPORTED BY VOTE OF SOME 300 SHOP STEWARDS IN JOHANNESBURG AREA, HAS DECIDED TO REAFFILIATE WITH TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION OF SOUTH AFRICA

(TUCSA). IT THUS BECOMES FIRST BLACK TRADE UNION TO REJOIN TUCSA SINCE TUCSA BARRED AFRICAN UNIONS IN 1969. AS LARGEST (23,000 MEMBERS) BLACK TRADE UNION IN COUNTRY, CLOTHING WORKERS DECISION REPRESENTS MAJOR VICTORY FOR TUCSA'S GENERAL SECRETARY ARTHUR GROBBELAAR WHO HAD BEEN LARGELY INSTRUMENTAL IN PERSUADING TUCSA TO OPEN ITS ROLLS ONCE MORE TO BLACK UNIONS.

2. LUCY MVUBELO, GENERAL SECRETARY OF CLOTHING WORKERS, SAID ONE OF MAJOR REASONS UNION OPTED TO REJOIN TUCSA AT THIS TIME WAS THREAT BY SAG TO ENFORCE PROVISIONS OF PHYSICAL PLANNING ACT REQUIRING GOVERNMENT APPROVAL FOR ANY INCREASE BY EMPLOYERS OF BLACK EMPLOYEES. MANY EMPLOYERS IN TEXTILE INDUSTRY OVER THE YEARS HAVE EXPANDED OPERATIONS WITHOUT SECURING NECESSARY APPROVAL FOR EXPANDED BLACK STAFF. GOVERNMENT THREATS TO FORCE EMPLOYERS TO RETRENCH WITH RESPECT TO BLACK EMPLOYEES COULD RESULT IN AS MANY AS

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8,000 CLOTHING WORKERS LOSING JOBS. CLOTHING WORKERS EVIDENTLY

FEEL TUCSA MAY BE ABLE TO LEND SUPPORT TO THEIR EFFORTS TO PERSUADE
SAG TO BACK DOWN.

3. REACTIION AMONG OTHER BLACK UNION LEADERS TO THE ACTION BY
CLOTHING WORKERS IS AT BEST MIXED. WHILE ADMITTING MVUBELO HAD
CONSULTED WITH THEM IN ADVANCE, AND WHILE UNDERSTANDING OF REASONS
FOR MOVE, THEY APPEAR TO DOUBT THE BENEFITS THAT MAY ACCRUE TO
CLOTHING WORKERS THROUGH AFFILIATION WITH TUCSA AT THIS TIME. MANY
OF THEM BELIEVE IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER TO HAVE WAITED TO APPROACH
TUCSA UNTIL OTHER BLACK UNIONS HAD DEVELOPED THEIR OWN IDENTITIES
AND STRENGTH INDEPENDENTLY, THUS INCREASING THEIR BARGAINING POSITION
IN NEGOTIATIONS PRECEDING AFFILIATION THEREBY GIING THEM GREATER
VOICE IN DETERMINING TUCSA POLICY. IN ANY CASE, SEEMS UNLIKELY
OTHER BLACK UNIONS WILL FOLLOW CLOTHING WORKER EXAMPLE IN IMMEDIATE
FUTURE. MUCH WILL ALSO DEPEND ON WHETHER TUCSA IS ABLE TO BE OF
APPARENT ASSISTANCE TO CLOTHING WORKERS IN THEIR FIRST TO KEEP THE
JOBS OF THEIR MEMBERSHIP.
GUTHRIE

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